**Telephone Exchange at Basot, Almora District**

*335. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some villages like Tarari, Dungari, Darmoli, Bamora and Maidari of Bhandarkhola adjoining Basot Telephone Exchange, District Almora of Uttaranchal are still deprived of telephone facility inspite of setting up a new telephone exchange at Basot;

(b) if so, the reasons for making villagers wait for telephone; and

(c) whether Government propose to provide such telephone connections by increasing the capacity of the exchange and laying of Optical Fibre Cable?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) Basot Telephone Exchange has equipped capacity of 152 lines and 53 working connections. The villages Tarari, Dungri, Darmoli, Bamora and Maidari are beyond local area of Basot Telephone Exchange and scattered. These villages are planned to be covered on land lines by March' 2002. However, at present there is not registered demand from these villages for provision of telephone connections.

There is no plan to increase the capacity of this exchange as sufficient spare capacity is already available to meet the present demand. Basot Telephone Exchange is parented o Bhatronjkhan exchange which is working on reliable MCPC (Multi Channel Per Carrier) media. However, this media is proposed to be replaced by Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) media during 2002-2003.

**Establishment of FTA with Pakistan**

*336. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken up the matter with Pakistan for establishing Free Trading Agreement (FTA) on the lines of India-Sri Lanka (FTA) for greater trade, investment flow and strengthening of economic relationship;

(b) if so, the response thereto; and

(c) if not, the action proposed in the matter?